

Week of July 15, 2002: MaineDOT Flash Facts
Topic: Transportation Safety Laws

Monday:

How well do you know the rules of the road? This week, Flash Facts will focus on some of Maine's traffic laws.

-Interim Driver's License: Newly licensed drivers under 18 years old may not carry passengers other than family members for 90 days, unless accompanied by a licensed driver (who must meet certain requirements).

-A licensed driver under 21 years old convicted of a moving violation within the first 2 years will have their license suspended:

- a. For 60 days on the first offense
- b. For 90 days on the second offense, and
- c. At least 120 days on the third offense.

A new Child Passenger Safety Law (Booster Seat) comes into effect on January 1, 2003:

(Some of the law's provisions include:)

-All children under 8 years old and between 40 and 80 pounds must ride in a federally-approved child restraint system (booster seat).

-A child under 12 years old that weighs less than 100 pounds must be properly secured in the back seat of the vehicle, if possible.

-ALL vehicle occupants over 8 years old must be secured in a (Federally approved) safety seat belt.

-The driver is responsible for properly securing children under 18 years old in the required child safety seat, booster seat or seat belt.

-Violating the child safety seat/restraint law will result in a fine plus court costs.

(Maine has 55 Child Safety Seat Program sites located throughout the state to assist low-income families in acquiring the proper safety seat/restraint system. Contact either the Department of Human Services or Department of Public Safety for further information.)

Wednesday:

Traffic safety laws are established for everyone's safety. How well do you know the rules of the road?

For commercial truck drivers: (Optional Use)

-Recent legislation has tripled overloading fines in most cases.

-Six axle combination trucks hauling 53 foot semi-trailers can weigh up to 100,000 pounds gross vehicle weight (GVW) on state roads, BUT are limited by Federal law to 80,000 pounds GVW on the interstate highway system, including the Maine Turnpike. (A study is underway to amend the federal law to allow 100,000 pound vehicles on the Turnpike.)

Alcohol:

- No driver or passenger can consume alcohol or possess an open alcoholic container.
 - Maine has a zero tolerance alcohol law for drivers under 21 years old. (If you are found with **any** blood alcohol content, you can be convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence, with severe penalties including loss of drivers license for at least one year, stiff fine, and possible jail time.)
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Headlights must be on:

- When windshield wipers are in constant use.
- Half an hour after sunset and half an hour before sunrise.
- When you cannot see 1000 feet ahead.
- Always, if you are on a motorcycle.

Friday:

Pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists are vulnerable users of the road. Here are some laws applying to them:

Pedestrians:

- Drivers turning at intersections must yield to pedestrians crossing on a green light.
 - Drivers must yield the right of way to a pedestrian crossing the street within a marked crosswalk (however pedestrians must not step out in front of moving vehicles, and get eye contact with the driver to ensure safety).
 - When crossing a sidewalk (such as when entering or exiting driveways) drivers must yield the right of way to all bicyclists and pedestrians on the sidewalk.
 - Pedestrians must face traffic when traveling.
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Bicyclists:

- Bicycle riders under age 16 are required to wear helmets and sit on passenger seats.
 - Motorists may not turn right into the path of a bicyclist proceeding in the same direction.
 - Bicyclists must ride to the right side of the road except when making left-hand turns.
 - Head and taillights are required when riding at night.
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Motorcycles -

Who Must Wear Helmets:

- Every person under 15 years old who rides as a passenger
- Every person who operates on a Learner's Permit
- Every operator for the first year after passing the road test.

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